

## Protecting Your Herd

Bovine TB spreads in droplets coughed or sneezed into the air, or by consumption of contaminated water, feed, or milk. Disease can spread from cattle to



other animals, and from other animals to cattle. Bovine TB usually spreads between herds by movement of infected cattle. To protect your herd, practice good biosecurity and know the source of your replacement animals. Consider TB testing new animals before they enter your herd. Maintain the

permanent identification of animals and keep records of animals moving into and out of your herd.

## Bovine Tuberculosis in People

The risk of people getting bovine TB from animals in the U.S. today is extremely remote. Bovine TB is very rare. All carcasses are carefully inspected and, if infected, are rejected from the human food chain. The bacterium causing TB is killed when meat is cooked and milk is pasteurized, hence these products are safe to eat. As most TB spreads in droplets being inhaled, it is also very unlikely that a person would become infected with bovine TB from exposure to an infected carcass.

People who drink raw milk from infected cattle, and workers who are in prolonged close contact with infected animals are at most risk. People who come into close contact with TB-infected animals are encouraged to take extra precautions, and may wish to contact the Department of Health Services. Remember, most people get TB from other people, not from livestock.

**Your veterinarian is an excellent source of information on bovine TB**

## For more information contact:

### California Department of Food and Agriculture

<http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/>

#### Animal Health Branch

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### United States Department of Agriculture

#### Veterinary Services

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## For Public Health Questions Contact:

### California Department of Health Services

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**Animal Health and Food Safety Services  
Animal Health Branch**

# Bovine Tuberculosis in California

**An Update for  
California Livestock  
Producers**



# 2003

## Bovine TB

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious bacterial disease that usually affects the respiratory system. Animals infected with TB may not show signs for years, and animals that appear healthy can transmit infection to other animals. Three main types of TB occur - human, avian, and bovine. Human TB is rarely transmitted to nonhumans, avian TB is typically restricted to birds (pigs and occasionally other animals have been affected), and bovine TB - or cattle TB – can infect most mammals, including humans.

Bovine TB has adversely affected animal health throughout recorded history. The United States (U.S.) eradication program for bovine TB began in the early 1900's. It included skin-testing cattle on farms or moving across state lines, and monitoring animals sent to slaughter. California has participated in this program for nearly a century, and bovine TB was nearly eradicated in the U.S.

## California Outbreak



Bovine TB has been confirmed in three dairy herds. The first infection was detected in May 2002 in a Tulare County herd, a second was discovered in a Tulare County herd in December 2002 and a third in late December 2002 at a Kings County slaughterhouse.

These herds were quarantined, the cattle destroyed and the

affected premises cleaned and disinfected. Cattle sold from or associated with each herd are being traced and tested. Quarantines were released and the restocking process has started. These herds will be tested repeatedly to ensure that they remain TB free.

## Source of the Disease

The origin of the disease in these dairies has not yet been identified. The first and second infected herds appear to be unrelated to the third infected herd.

The disease may have been present for some time in a chronically infected animal that appeared healthy. Animals that had contact with them over the last five years are being investigated to identify the source of infection, and contact herds will be TB tested.

## Impact on California's TB Status

On April 25, 2003 the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) removed California from its list of TB accredited-free states because California no longer met the USDA requirements for a TB-free state. California is now classified as modified accredited advanced. State status is based on a cattle and bison population that is TB free, the effectiveness of the state's TB eradication program and compliance with the USDA standards for cattle and bison. A state is classified as modified accredited advanced when there are 1-3 infected herds in a state with fewer than 30,000 herds.

## Impact on Livestock Producers

This new classification means all breeding cattle require one negative TB test prior to leaving the state. It is designed to prevent the spread of TB to other states. The new TB-testing requirements do not apply to sexually intact heifers moving to feedlots, or steers and spayed heifers until March 30, 2004.

California has agreements with neighboring states to ease the TB-testing requirements on breeding cattle moving interstate annually for grazing on approved Commuter Permits. Breeding beef cattle 24 months of age and older require a TB test within 12 months of application for the permit and subsequently every three years to continue to move annually until California's TB status changes.

***Some states have more restrictive policies for moving cattle. Always check the state of destination for their TB test requirements.***

California has imposed stricter TB-testing requirements on cattle entering the state. As of August 15, 2003 California requires a TB test on all breeding dairy cattle entering the state. California will propose that Mexican feeder steers be restricted to "designated" pastures and feedlot pens for the 2004 import season.

## Efforts to Regain TB-Free Status

California has depopulated all of its infected herds and can reapply for free status in April 2005, provided no additional infected herds are detected. Conversely, states that elect a "test and removal" process instead of depopulation, must wait a minimum of five years to reapply for TB-free status.

## California's TB Eradication Plan

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), USDA, and the cattle industry are working together to control and eradicate bovine TB from California. The plan is to continue to test all 677 dairy herds in Tulare, Kings, and Fresno Counties (~773,000 milking cows), prioritizing dairies that recently received out-of-state cattle.

Slaughterhouse surveillance, the primary method for detecting new cases of bovine TB in the U.S., has been enhanced throughout California. USDA

veterinarians inspect all cattle slaughtered at meat-packing plants for TB. USDA personnel working in California plants detected 2 of the 3 infected herds. California leads the nation in slaughterhouse surveillance. To date, over 1,000 samples have been submitted from California slaughterhouses for TB diagnosis in 2003.



California is seeking approval to use improved diagnostic methods in the TB eradication program. The USDA has approved a new blood test, the Gamma Interferon test, as a confirmatory TB test for cattle, and California hopes to offer this test soon.